

Film Notes

August Wilson once said, "The past is present" as a way to describe how the events and people of our past stay with us no matter how long ago they actually existed. As a documentarian of the African-American experience through the 20th Century, Wilson uses his work to develop this concept and to show how characters must contend with personal and societal aspects of the past.

A symbol creates a range of associations beyond itself. Symbols may express ideas, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning. While the piano is an obvious symbol, all of its possible meanings are not necessarily obvious. Moreover, the play contains many more symbols beyond the piano.

A minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. This relation may illuminate the meaning of the entire work.

Though August Wilson does not directly lecture about political or social issues in his work, his goal to represent the African-American experience in a particular time period in history naturally creates important context and commentary about these issues and their contribution to the overall meaning of the work.